

Lesson Plan: Organization of Fairfax County Government

Connection to POS: Benchmark 4.26: Students will explain the organization of Fairfax County government. The teacher should be cognizant of using current resources after any election changes.

This lesson focuses on the organization of Fairfax County government including the Board of Supervisors, County Executive, Commonwealth's Attorney, Sheriff, and Clerk of the Circuit Court. An extension opportunity to explore County services and programs is included.



Objectives

Students will reach this benchmark when they are able to:

1. Identify Fairfax County government as an urban county executive form of government, known generically as a council-manager government, in which a part-time Board of Supervisors sets broad policy and the County Executive implements policy by developing a yearly budget, recommending the appointment of senior civil servants, and overseeing the operation of government on a daily basis:
 - A. Describe the term of office held by members of the Board of Supervisors and the districts they represent.
 - B. Describe both how the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors is elected and the term and prerogatives of the office.
 - C. Describe both how the County Executive is appointed and the length of term of office.
 - D. Identify the current authority and responsibility of the Board of Supervisors and the County Executive.
2. Identify the three constitutional officers who are elected by and serve Fairfax County: sheriff, attorney for the Commonwealth, and clerk of the circuit court.
 - A. Describe the election process and term for each office.
 - B. Explain the responsibilities of each office.
3. Identify the responsibilities of county governments to enact and enforce local ordinances.
 - A. to provide for the health, safety, welfare, comfort, and convenience of its inhabitants (the police power) and to provide for commerce and industry in the jurisdiction
 - B. to levy taxes permitted to local governments and to appropriate local funds for local purposes

- C. to borrow money and to pledge the credit of the jurisdiction within prescribed limits or according to prescribed procedures
- D. to take private property for public use, subject to statutory requirements and with just compensation (eminent domain)
- E. to sue and be sued



Materials

- Fairfax County Website <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/>
- Board of Supervisors homepage <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/gov/bos/homepage.htm>
- *Citizens Handbook* <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/handbook/main.htm>
(a copy is included in this notebook)
- *An Introduction to the Board of Supervisors* (a copy is included in this notebook)
- Student worksheet [25 questions with answer key]



Time Needed

- 45-90 minutes



Procedures

- Teachers may choose to cover this quickly through a lecture using transparencies and the worksheet; or as a classroom activity; or as a take-home assignment.
- Make copies of the worksheet and select one of the above resources to find the correct information.



Assessment

- Worksheet accuracy
- Nuts and bolts quiz to be developed by the teacher
- Student projects, presentations, and portfolios



Extensions

- Reword the questions from the worksheet into a “Jeopardy” style quiz game.
- Assign a small group to research, summarize, and present information to the class about the Board, the County Executive, other elected officials, and key service units such as parks and recreation programs, safety services (police, fire and rescue), schools, libraries, judicial system, human services, and public services. Ask students to include basic structural/organization information and a list of citizen services provided by each agency. Encourage use of visuals such as posters and charts. Use PowerPoint if available.
- Have students identify the figures on the “Who’s Who” worksheet.